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### **Continuing professional development for sports coaches**

A road less travelled

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**Abstract:**

In the UK, there is currently no coherent model of professional development for coaching personnel. CPD should maintain currency of professional practice while enhancing knowledge and understanding. This study used interviews to examine coaches' views of CPD, whether they understood the key principles and to assess whether or not they value or appreciate its necessity. Three themes emerged from the interview data; the value placed on CPD, coach development and the input of the NGB/Sporting Organisation. Many coaches in this study felt that they did not value CPD, because they could not see it developing them as coaches nor did it appear to be a priority with their NGBs. This study suggests that any CPD model for coaching needs to move from a more prescriptive provision at the earlier stages of certification to one that is more individualized and flexible at the later stages.

## **Continuing Professional Development for Sports Coaches: a road less travelled**

“The road to success is always under construction” (Anon), unfortunately many sports coaches and sporting bodies globally believe that once the initial strips of coaching-bitumen have been laid the coach’s learning journey is over. In this era of accountability it is now accepted that all professionals must continue to learn to be effective, to be contextually relevant, and to be worthy enough to continue to engage in their calling, and central to this process is the notion of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

CPD is the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge, skills and understanding, for the execution of professional and vocational duties to enhance, in the context of lifelong learning, the individual’s contribution to his or her profession or work.

Construction Industry Council (1986, p. 3)

Implicit in the above statement, which has become one of the most globally accepted definitions of CPD (Friedman & Phillips, 2001, p. 4), whether undertaken formally or personally is that the process embraces both personal as well as professional elements and is not solely about individuals maintaining currency of professional practice or enhancing knowledge and understanding. It is suggested that CPD should axiomatically help the organization involved facilitate the development of its ‘employees’ and this should be an embedded feature of the organization’s strategic aim or mission. CPD is well established in a number of professions being mandatory in many, for example, in teaching and the legal profession. CPD activities can include lectures, seminars, workshops, practical activities, videoconferences, online learning, congresses, conventions, in-house company training and other forms of face-to-face and distance learning programs. The conceptualization of the education of a coach has grown

organically, through many ad hoc routes, often driven by individuals within sports organizations rather than organizations themselves, and in some countries by regulation. The education of sports coaches has, however, received far less attention than other vocations, such as, medicine, nursing and teaching, perhaps as a result of the volunteer status of many of the coaches and the entrenched perception that ‘coaching’ is not a ‘profession’. Thus, not surprisingly in sport in the UK there is currently no coherent model of professional development for coaching personnel: some sports have mandatory requirements whilst others have none. Again, this could well stem from the fact that there is no professional body overseeing coaching, as exists with some of the professions mentioned above and with coaching in other countries. As ‘coaching’ in the UK aspires to become a ‘profession’, this must be addressed as a matter of urgency and perhaps includes learning lessons from organizations, sporting and non-sporting, worldwide.

### Models of Professional Development

In the UK those professional bodies that use ongoing programs of CPD do so for the maintenance of professional standards; for example, lawyers are required to complete a minimum of 16 hours of CPD per year with at least 25% consisting of participation in accredited training courses (The Law Society, 2011). Teachers, also, must demonstrate an on-going commitment to maintain their professional expertise through an agreed program of continuing professional development. A principle of educational policy in the United Kingdom states that teachers will be developed in a logical and structured way from the moment they enter the profession until retirement (Armour & Yelling, 2004). Teachers are currently expected to commit 35 hours a year in fulfilling CPD requirements. Within other countries, Australia, Singapore and United States,

there are similar rigid obligations for remaining part of the teaching profession. Other professions have similar conditions, some more prescriptive than others, as shown in Table 1 below.

Insert Table 1 about here

Some organizations for example, surveying and accountancy in the table above, have a chartered status, indicating that these chartered individuals have achieved a professional competence in their area. The necessity for CPD only applies to those with chartered status and assists with employment, progression and credibility in their field.

CPD is generally thought of as attending courses to update knowledge and maintain professional competence and there are a number of models ranging from prescriptive to flexible forms. Some organizations advocate mandatory attendance at 'update' sessions, others prescribe the accumulation of a number of points over a set time period, whilst some promote a logging of professional events attended.

However, as French and Dowds suggest CPD must be viewed as more than merely attending courses – it can be “day-to-day experiences, performance reviews, journal clubs, peer discussion, in-service training, critical reading and personal reflection... supervision, lecturing....teaching, writing reports, significant incidence analysis and research are also identified as CPD activities” (French & Dowds, 2008, p. 192). For example, the healthcare profession utilizes a number of varied delivery modes for its CPD, online questionnaires, problem-based learning, collaborative working, maintaining a personal work diary/logbook, as well long-term planning sessions and conference/seminar attendance (See, Roberts, Brockington, Doyle, Pearce, Bowie, Simmance, Evans & Crowe, 2009; Gould, Berridge & Kelly, 2007).

## Benefits of Professional Development

Benefits of CPD programs are said to be improved retention, enhanced learning and raised standards (Nolan, 2004, Whitmore, 2002), whilst more recent research has demonstrated that the introduction of compulsory CPD requirements has provided the necessary impetus to participate in CPD activities (Sturrock & Lennie, 2009). However, research in the healthcare industry has indicated that compulsory CPD does not improve competence or behavior change, surely a desired outcome (French & Dowds, 2008). It has however, been seen to positively impact upon staff retention; that is, if it is properly structured and delivered (Gould, Berridge & Kelly, 2007).

Effective CPD in the field of sport coaching should engender a sense of responsibility for both participating in and valuing CPD, where coaches control and self-regulate their learning and, therefore, their CPD. Self-regulated learning is reflective learning that involves monitoring, regulating, and controlling cognition, behaviour, and motivation. Does CPD develop this responsibility in coaches? Recent research in the US has shown that providing opportunities for participants to self-regulate their learning is beneficial, however support is necessary in the early stages (Kramarski & Michalsky, 2009). Though most coaches have no prior experience with self-regulation interventions there is a need for context specific self-regulation in all professional practice (Kaplan et al, 2009). This suggests that CPD should develop individuals/coaches who are able to make informed decisions, which is essential if they are going to enhance their engagement with CPD and begin to view CPD as having relevance to their own specific development needs.

Research undertaken by *Skills Active*<sup>1</sup> in 2007 identified the potential to both increase participation in sport and physical activity as well as in creating sustainable career pathways for sports coaches. This is a central element of the development of the UK Action Plan for Coaching, which includes a direct undertaking to create a CPD framework for coaches (Sport Coach UK, 2007). The institution and implementation of the CPD framework will also meet the acknowledged coaching workforce needs in the UK, which indicate that there are clear and consistent signs of skills shortages and gaps in knowledge in the profession. The wider development of coaching and a heightened level of self-reflection and self-regulated learning by coaches, if coupled with a cross-fertilization of coaching practices, philosophies, and personnel between disparate sports would oxygenate the field and could, potentially, generate more or at least different, opportunities for career development and future employment (Sport Coach UK, 2007). Think of the ‘added value’ that networking and professional conversations with coaches from varying backgrounds, cultures and education environments would bring to the concepts of professional learning.

The need for coaches to ‘advance’ their practice is equally as necessary whether they work at the participation level, introducing youngsters to sport, or at the performance or elite level. Similarly, it is essential that sports organizations should embed distinct career pathways for coaches to advance to the performance and expert levels. The development of such career pathways should be seen as a prerequisite ahead of coaching’s professionalization, irrespective of whether this is directed at coaches working with full-time athletes and teams, or those working at the introductory levels of sporting participation. It may well be necessary for these structural changes, including sport-specific CPD programmes to be established before coaching can

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<sup>1</sup> Skills Active is a UK government-backed organisation for the active leisure and learning industry.

rightfully assume its professional mantle. Whether this is the sequence or not and even if professionalization does not come to fruition in the near future, it is essential that on-going training and development of coaches through CPD must become a feature of all sports coaching programmes in the UK as happens in other countries, such as Canada and Australia.

Presently there seems to be an acceptance of the demands of CPD by most other recognized professions but will busy coaches, often part-time and/or voluntary, be able to take time out of their demanding schedules to attend CPD courses when the benefits may not be deemed tangible. It is at this juncture that a paradox relating to coaching emerges, for most coaches are not engaged professionally, the majority being volunteers, so how then can they be expected to undertake continual CPD and if they do not, how can they be considered as part of the profession of sport coaching?

The aim of this study was to examine UK coaches' views on CPD, whether they understood the key principles upon which it is based and to assess whether or not they value or appreciate its necessity. This is a complex undertaking as there is not a consistent or uniform structure of CPD across not only the coaching levels of an individual sport but across all sports in general. This situation has not improved in the years since Friedman and Phillips, in their study looking at the barriers and drivers to participation in CPD across all professions, said "that CPD in its current form is both confused and contested and that many professionals find the concept bewildering and its practice difficult." (Friedman & Phillips, 2001, p. 1). The present situation in sport in the UK certainly presents a confused and at times bewildering visage. Some sports have established complex and rigorous programs of on-going professional development whilst others have no systems in place at all. Thus, the coaches in this study will



present with utterly divergent knowledge-bases, experiences and understanding and appreciation of CPD as a concept. Following the interviews and the analysis of the data produced, a series of recommendations regarding the provision of CPD in the field of sports coaching will be made.

## Methods

### Participants

The twenty five participants (18 males, 7 females) involved in this study were at the time all coaching in the UK and had a mean age of 37.4 years. They held National Governing Body (NGB) qualifications and as a requirement of the study had to be currently coaching in their sport. The coaches were categorized in the manner suggested by Lyle (2002): novice (Level 1 & 2); developmental (Level 3), or elite (Level 4 & 5). All participants volunteered for this study and signed appropriate informed consent forms prior to the start of the interviews. This research was undertaken following the ethical guidelines of the University of Edinburgh.

More detailed information regarding the participants is contained in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

### Coach Interviews

Twenty five separate, semi-structured interviews (Gratton & Jones, 2004) were conducted, one with each of the coaches concerned during the data collection phase of this study. The primary purpose of the interviews was to investigate the coaches' views on continuing professional development. The questions for the interviews were constructed by the lead researcher in line with Hill, Le Grange & Newmark, (2003). All researchers agreed that the questions were appropriate in terms of their potential to elicit

responses to the topic under investigation. This resulted in the development of an interview guide which, as well as including demographic information, incorporated the questions contained in Figure 1.

Insert figure 1 here

All of the interviews for this study were conducted in a place of the coaches' choosing at a time that was most convenient to them. The interviews, which were digitally recorded, were conducted in an area free from distraction. At the close of each interview, the researcher provided a summary of the coach's response to verify understanding and accuracy (Bench, 2007). This summary afforded the main researcher the opportunity to highlight the most salient points raised by the coach at each pertinent point in the interview and to ensure congruence between the researcher's interpretation and the coach's intention. The interviews lasted between 27 and 130 minutes. The discrepancy between the times of the interviews reflected the depth to which the coaches were able to discuss and engage with many coaching concepts.

#### Data Analysis

All interviews were subsequently transcribed and analysed for key themes, important participant comments, discrepancies in responses, and reactions to the questions in the interview guide (Figure 1). A selective thematic analysis (van Manen, 1998) was undertaken with each transcript being read repeatedly to identify categories, patterns and themes that contributed to the core theme (King, 2004). Labels were then assigned to these categories, patterns and themes and were later standardised across all transcripts. The next step involved scanning across all transcripts and identifying those categories and patterns that dovetailed together in meaningful and distinct ways into three major themes of the value placed on CPD, coach development and the input of the NGB/Sporting Organisation. The trustworthiness of the data extracted from the

transcripts is contingent upon the audit trail being complete, comprehensible and systematically related to methodological approaches (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1982, Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To ensure the integrity of the subsequent categorization of the inductive construction of the coaches' meaning and their collective voice throughout the study, the interviewees were progressively given opportunities to review the researcher's' interpretation of the data from their interviews (Koch, 1994, Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

### Findings and Discussion

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data, these were:

- the value placed on CPD
- coach development
- the input of the NGB/Sporting Organisation.

A wide range of perceptions of the value CPD emerged from the coaches, from those who rated CPD as being a quality provision to those who were not cognizant of CPD largely because they had not been, literally, introduced to the concept. The discussion of the notion of 'coach development' produced many complex considerations and raised further difficult issues. Such issues emerged in the main because to have a working understanding of the area demanded that the interviewee was able to determine what were, in fact, their developmental needs before they could be able to meaningfully suggest CPD activities that would fulfill identified needs. In other words, coaches were not able to identify what they did not know and therefore unable to suggest developmental requirements. Many of the coaches interviewed could, on a prosaic level, see the value of CPD to their development as coaches, but they tended to blame the sport's organizing body and its communication system for not appropriately disseminating CPD information to their coaches. Using the exact words of the coaches

in this cohort their views and opinions have been displayed and, from the level of emotion expressed, it is clear that the matter is of some concern. The coaching systems and structures in the UK are considered to be well organized and administered so these findings could provide valuable learning for emerging systems and structures globally.

#### Value of CPD

As coaching in the UK does not currently have a professional status or structure, many NGBs do not have any stipulated CPD requirements or demands, whilst others merely have recommendations. From the interviews in this study it became apparent that the coaches had a wide range of views as to the value of CPD, to the extent that six of the group (24%) had not heard of CPD, not even under a different nomenclature and had certainly not taken part in any, others obdurately spurned the possibility that it may be of value. Julie, a recently qualified novice coach, could see no value in CPD, saying:

*I have no need for CPD. I'm not sure about the necessity for updating in badminton.*

Ian, a soccer coach, also thought that

*I've done my FA level 2 – if they told me then that I would have to keep doing this c\*\*\* then I wouldn't have bothered. My mates don't have any qualifications and no-one keeps asking them to do more.*

Sue explained that within the sport of lacrosse:

*We don't have to - there's no system. There's a mixture of things that are lacrosse specific and things that can be bolted on but it is still difficult to get things at the right level. The lacrosse specific are almost guaranteed not to be available for what I need. Things like sport psychology are more available but again difficult to meet my needs - if you want to be told one more time about goal-setting, go to a psychology seminar!"*

She was backed up by another elite coach, Carol who considered that:

*I've heard of some of these bespoke CPD programmes but when you look into them a bit deeper – they are only bespoke if you are*

*wanting to find out the same things as other people. My needs are very specific and I'm not sufficiently convinced that these courses will actually address them.*

These largely negative views of CPD show not only the range of opinions but also, clearly in the case of Julie and Ian, exemplify a complete misunderstanding of the principles of CPD and the possible benefits it offers to them as coaches. Sue, who is also negative, but not as one who does not appreciate the value of CPD but because as a coach she attended sessions that were not fulfilling or, as she believes met her needs. Whereas Carol, it would appear, seems to favour a more individualised approach.

A developmental volleyball coach, Rona, had a different opinion, reflecting:

*I've been coaching for a while but I don't think I know it all – in fact, the more I coach, the more I need to know – CPD is vital to my development. Not only do I get new ideas but I meet other coaches which is great.*

Clearly, Rona seems to be enthusiastic about her CPD experiences, highlighting interacting with other coaches as an unintended but significant benefit. Kenny described the formal requirements of UK Athletics and also outlined suggestions he felt would enhance the UK Athletics coaching upgrading process:

*Because UK Athletics, as with most NGB's nowadays, demand updates, you get credits for x, y & z. The bulk of the credits come from lots of wee courses, so I get to tick some boxes. Some of this I have to find myself, nobody's guiding me to it. I think in an ideal world it should, I'm a bit hesitant about saying that it needs to be there all the time because I could do as much for myself almost, as long as I've got someone to contact to talk to about things, as I could do having to go on CPD. I'm busy, I'm not a paid coach, that's fairly key. I actually think it's needed more at the lower level though, than it is at the top level but I don't like the idea of some coaches saying 'I've been coaching at this level for 20 years so I've got 20 years worth of experience.' I actually don't think like that. The funny thing is if you asked me the question, I'd say yes, I think it should be but if you ask me if I want to do it - no, I don't. I want to pick what I want to do and not have to do it in the timescale that suits someone else.*

Kenny's detailed response raises many issues regarding CPD. Firstly, coaches need to feel that what they are required to do is of direct benefit to them personally. Currently, elite coaches do not perceive existing coaching awards to be useful tools for their development, so it could be inferred that CPD courses would be viewed in the same way (Irwin et al, 2004). CPD programmes are said to improve retention, enhance learning and raise standards but, if busy volunteer coaches are required to attend these courses then, the opposite could be the case (Whitmore, 2002). This is a clear rationale for coaches to value, control and self-regulate their CPD provision. Secondly, coaches may consider that CPD is good practice in theory, but lack the motivation to attend, especially if they perceive the courses are of little practical benefit. Finally, Kenny appeared to be suggesting some form of needs analysis should be conducted with every coach, allowing for a custom-made package of CPD to be designed. As beneficial as this may seem such a process would be extremely time-consuming and not cost-effective. Critically, however, such a system would necessitate that a certain degree of both transferability and transparency between different sports organizations would need to exist. Logically, there is no reason why this should not happen, however, there would be a distinct possibility that inter-sport rivalries and administrative clashes between conflicting organizations and individual coaches would frustrate such a scheme as they would not tolerate having their practice questioned by others from outside their sport.

### Developing Coaches

Two of the football coaches in this study were not aware of any requirements for CPD set by their NGB. When asked about how they stayed current in their coaching knowledge and abreast of new developments, Bob answered:

*The only way it keeps current is I use the stuff I've learned.*

Realizing that there is an obvious need to stay current in terms of coaching practice Tim provided more information, saying:

*Because there are so many different areas within coaching, learning styles, management styles, technological aspects, I think I always try to keep up, whether it be conferences or whatever.*

He outlined some such situations, particularly those where he has learned from more senior coaches, who with a vast amount of experience provided him with learning experiences that he felt were almost 'magical'.

*I've assistant coached with people quite a lot. I kind of prefer doing it that way because I like bouncing ideas off other people, but I've coached with some people, where I've been thinking this hasn't worked but I'm not sure what to do and they go this is what we're doing because they know, they see it and that comes from, for these people 30, 40 years of playing and coaching. They put things in place and it works - seems a bit magical, almost.*

Ben, a judo coach, expressed very strong opinions about both coaching and the place of CPD as part of coach development, stating:

*The two big areas of coaching - if you look at the technical side, preparation, performance planning type of thing and then there's the whole management of athletes and, I suppose, management skills. Coaches can't be good at all of these things, especially with the f\*\*\*\*\* money available – generally they are good at one area or the other. That's what the CPD courses should be highlighting rather than technical stuff*

Kenny, an athletics coach, highlighted his frustrations with the current system of CPD in his sport, declaring:

*I want to go to more coach education courses at the right level, with the right people to ask the right questions. Really, I would like to go and spend a week with British Rowing, a week with British Cycling because I think so much is transferable, we've missed the boat. I mean, everyone wants to go and see the Kenyans run, why not go and see UK's Rowing squads, they're world class. I would much rather do that, ask questions of swim coaches, why are you doing 130,000m per week for a 50m swimmer? I want the answers and that would benefit me more than necessarily going on loads of courses for athletics. I still have things I want to pick up in athletics,*

*there are still questions I need answered.*

The comments from Ben and Kenny, demonstrated a willingness to learn and to develop as coaches however, both were evidently dissatisfied with what was on offer from their respective organisations. From their comments and those of others in this cohort emphatically suggest that sporting organizations should structure and offer CPD programmes that facilitate the on-going professional development of their coaches rather than just allowing this happen organically from exchanges with fellow coaches in their chosen sports. Such programmes may well and perhaps should embrace ideas and experiences from other sports. The transferability between sports specifically mentioned by Kenny and alluded to by Ben, could form the basis of an alternative method of delivering CPD to coaches.

#### Input of NGB/Sporting Organisation

Joanne considered that the ice skating organization was very proactive in CPD, requiring coaches to update constantly, stating:

*For our coaching, we constantly have to attend these seminars. You have to do so many per year to keep up your coaching and for your coaching you have to do a written examination, an on-ice examination, you have to do an off-ice examination and you have to take a pupil for a lesson as well and a logbook. So there's quite a lot of stuff and it wasn't just come along and pass. I think it's quite hard for people to attend two a year.*

Joanne has conjoined CPD with the practice of re-certification, admittedly they can be interrelated, however, they should never be considered as being synonymous. Peter, a hockey coach with considerable experience, acknowledged both the differences and similarities, conveying his thoughts:

*I think re-certification and CPD tend to drive one another. Originally, before the recreditation came in, the club was doing it anyway because the*



*local development officer would tend to run courses so the NCF courses tended to come on and the club would pay for people to go on them. So that was a kind of CPD thing we were doing there but now when the recreditation (sic) came in it became more formal, I suppose. I think it's every 2 years and a level 1 coach has to get a certain number of points, a level 2 coach has to get a certain number of points, obviously a higher number of points. You get them through various different activities, some of them are coaching sessions, coaching your club, coaching the district, coaching nationally and then attending courses, getting your umpires certification, that kind of thing. So there's a variety of different things you can do in order to get your points total.*

From the comments of these coaches it would appear that the sports of hockey and ice-skating are more proactive than the other sports reviewed in this study and the basis for this lack of success may simply be an administrative mal-practice or omission in the NGB's administrative practice such as, the lack of maintenance of the sport's database. For example, Tom had never received a follow-up from his NGB regarding any development programs, but generously thought:

*I've moved around quite a lot so it's difficult to get in touch. I was on a mailing list*

Another hockey coach, James, with 15 years experience, however, reflected negatively saying,

*I've been on a number of updates run by hockey or other courses run by Sport Coach UK and I really don't see that they have helped other than putting a tick in the box.*

Grant scathingly pointed out that he only valued CPD:

*In terms of only things that, by and large, I've either organised myself or engaged in myself. Currently my NGB, the Scottish NGB, doesn't do anything in terms of CPD for the qualification I hold. The British body is kind of turn up once every 4 years and be told stuff that you were told 4 years previously. You have to go, you pay your money, smile, you don't say anything and get your ticket stamped for another 4 years.*

Nicola commented upon the lack of leadership and direction in relation to CPD in her sport, swimming:

*I want to progress up the coaching ladder but no-one can tell me how to do that. Swimming is useless and there is no-one else to help.*

Patrick presented a detailed description of the formalised procedure that tennis coaches have to go through in order to keep their status as licensed coaches. He described the process:

*Every 3 years you have to have had 54 points, and you have to have so many each year within these 54. Say I do a course, for instance I did a course on Silicon Coach, it was a morning, that's 3 points. I do the big tennis thing - that's 10 points. I've been on the Basic Moves, I write to the LTA, saying how many points do I get for that. If it's a two day course, it will be say 12 points. Part of that's first aid - you have to do that. If you don't get the 54 points then you're not a licensed coach, you will lose your license, and I think that's good. There are coaches that object to that, that will lose their license because they don't. Tennis Scotland don't push it enough but they always encourage people to become licensed coaches, but if they don't Tennis Scotland won't use them, but there are coaches in clubs that aren't licensed - I think it's wrong. I think they should keep up to date, I mean, any profession should keep up to date.*

However, in squash there are, as Matt clarified, individualized development programs, paid for and organized by the NGB.

*With Scottish Squash, then that will be part of my contract on the performance coaching side. There's money set aside for my own development. That may mean I go on another higher level course. I would say for me personally, working with some of the senior teams is perhaps pencilled in. I'd learn a lot by actually talking to the players and working with other coaches. Our performance director will be travelling with and coaching the teams in the Nationals, European Championships and Worlds. I think sitting down on the same bench when the players are off and looking and talking, I mean if you've got world class players that you're spending a week or so with you'll gain a vast amount. A high level coach said to me you learn far more sitting in the bar talking to the players and other coaches than you do on any course.*

Evidently there was disparity between the various NGBs both in terms of organisation and the provision of CPD opportunities, but more fundamentally on the basic premise upon which CPD is grounded as an entity. All of these coaches acknowledged that there

was some provision for CPD in their sports, however, tennis, as explained by Patrick, appeared to have a formalised system that tolerated some element of flexibility. Patrick also discussed the employment requirements for tennis, which stipulate that a coach is required to be both licensed and to maintain their accreditation over a three year period. Grant, James and Nicola also made it clear that they were not satisfied with the NGB provision within their various sports. The UKCC does have a requirement for CPD to be undertaken by the coaches of its member-sports but, surprisingly, has chosen to introduce it at the lower levels of coaching qualification (Sport Coach UK, 2007). Grant and Sue made it clear that they had to organise their own CPD, and evidently, it would appear that they may have to continue doing so for a period of time. Matt appeared to be very pleased with the CPD arrangements made by his NGB on his behalf. Not only was it built into his contractual obligations, he was also paid to take part in the programme. An experience which he commented, offered a range of activities, from attending courses to interacting with other coaches and players, incorporated into his CPD plan. Matt seemed particularly enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn from other coaches, not just during such practice sessions but also during their high level competitive clashes. Perhaps other NGBs should follow this CPD model utilised by squash, though, it is suggested that involvement in the planning stage for CPD for early career coaches would not be as successful as that with more senior coaches.

### The Wish List

The last interview question was in the form of a wish list – what did these coaches think would help them develop their coaching? Since the interviews were concerned with the benefits and value of CPD, the coaches had been reflecting upon these aspects for a period of time prior to this question being asked. After ranking all the answers, the top

three choices were money, mentors and reflective skills. Money was only mentioned by developmental and elite coaches whereas mentoring opportunities were only mentioned by novice and developmental coaches. This suggests that CPD requirements vary dependent on the level and experience of the coach.

The coaches' wish list also illustrated that there was a general desire to observe more experienced coaches at work. The coaches in this study still felt that this was a helpful method of development despite the findings of Gilbert & Trudel (2004) that suggest there are few coaches whose practice is worthy of simulation. Future research could examine the usefulness of this practice.

Interestingly, amongst the expert/elite coaches, one of their explicit wishes was that CPD should be worthwhile and relevant, not merely something that has to be endured. Perhaps coaches at this level need to have their CPD requirements assessed on an individual basis rather than fulfilling set criteria. This would imply a flexible approach from the CPD providers.

## Conclusion

As mentioned previously, there was very mixed opinion amongst this group of coaches as to the value and benefit they attributed to CPD. There were even novice coaches who had no understanding of the concept, despite being actively involved in coaching. Much of this may stem from the volunteer status of many coaches even considering the wide range of coaching environments in which they work. There was a lack of understanding regarding the purpose of CPD as well as the intended benefits. This, it would seem, needs to be explained at an early stage in the coach education process so as to inculcate the idea of CPD as being an established practice and one that is valuable to them and something over which they have control. It would demystify it and possibly reduce the

apparent sense of alienation many coaches, as shown in this study, feel about compulsory CPD.

There was also a perception that current CPD provision did not meet the needs of the coaches, especially those who were considered to be elite coaches. The need for individuality in CPD was highlighted rather than the current 'one size fits all' that these coaches viewed as the norm. The wider introduction of individualized CPD programmes would necessitate more time and money needed from course organisers and coach development personnel. This option remains problematic as it can be seen that many NGBs have yet to establish even the most fundamental CPD framework even though this was recommended in 2007.

There is a great deal of inter-linkage between the three themes of value placed on CPD, coach development and the influence of the respective NGBs. Many coaches in this study felt that they did not value CPD because they could not see it developing them as coaches nor did it appear to be to be a priority with their sporting organizations. Considerable angst emerged from the fact that the provision and management of the CPD programme was poor and consequently was perceived by a group of the coaches as being a waste of time, characterized by a lack of appropriate leadership and relevance. Other studies have shown that 'professionals' even if they are all in the same 'profession' and are not a homogenous group (Friedman & Phillips, 2001, p. 6) and the variations in terms of, "differences in career stage, preferred learning style, (and) individual ambition" (Friedman & Phillips, 2001, p. 6) all provide foundations for barriers, real or imagined to be constructed by participants. It is thus vital that in the coaching domain, because of the extent volunteer and part-time coaches, even at the

elite level, any CPD programme, in fact any centralized, compulsory activity has to be both cost-effective and efficiently organized. Communication, follow-up, and relevance of all such activities have to be impeccable to offset the cynicism and negativity as expressed above in such comments as made above (p. 15) by Nicola and Grant. Any CPD activity must be more contextually relevant and more meaningful for the individual coaches than being merely an exercise in ‘ticking a box’ every few years as implied by James (p. 15). And obviously, it is essential that all activities be of a high quality so as to avoid being judged as “crap” as Ian suggested (p. 10).

As a significant percentage of practising sport coaches are volunteers, perhaps CPD would not be appropriate as it is considered to be the ‘hallmark’ of a profession. Many established professions *only* require CPD to maintain professional accreditation at a certain level, as with the chartered status in accountancy and quantity surveying. Could this be a future consideration for coaching when, or perhaps if, it assumes professional status? The establishment of the category of ‘chartered coach’ in the qualification framework for sports coaches could be basis for the recognition of the specific competences that define a coaching professional. However, there is a strong, if not immutable, case to be made for CPD at each and every level of coaching qualification.

Insert Table 3 about here

This study suggests that any CPD model for coaching needs to move from a more prescriptive provision at the earlier stages of certification to one that is more individualized and flexible at the later stages (See Table 3). As coaches would be required to participate in CPD activities throughout their coaching careers a programme would need to be put in place that accommodates all manner of ‘journeys’ travelled by coaches with as many differing motivations and aspirations. There could be a locked

step year by year programme or it could be a rolling-programme of courses that is made available over, for example, a three year period. However, whatever form it takes, it should cover a number of key areas, for example: recent innovations in a specific sport or pedagogical aspect; strength and conditioning; skill acquisition; tactics, and people management skills. As globalization and the impact of migration take hold it is vital that in all such callings as coaching and teaching practitioners, administrators and support staff should be fully aware and committed to concepts of equity and diversity thus, it is suggested that CPD programmes should have such ideals embedded in their structures and that there should also be specific units of study that seek to ensure that practitioners at *all* levels are socially, culturally competent.

CPD is viewed as a significant contributor to many professions, for example, teaching, law and nursing. To its embarrassment coaching at present does not share the same regard for CPD as these and most other professions. This dereliction of, what is essentially, its duty of care stems from the tension and ambivalence that emanates from the basic definition of, what is a 'sports coach'. For example, no-one can call themselves a teacher, lawyer or nurse unless they have achieved a pre-determined level of qualification. Given the duty of care that coaches accept should not there be a more stringent level of control over the designation of a sport coach? The authors strongly advocate such a position. CPD must motivate and encourage sport coaches to continue to learn and develop their skills throughout their coaching careers, but in the final analysis they must do so with the lives and futures of their charges in mind: sport and sports-people deserve no less.

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Tables

Profession	Regulatory Body	Number of Hours
Dentistry (UK)	General Dental Council	At least 150 hours of CPD over five years
Registered European Lawyers	Solicitors Regulation Authority	A minimum of 16 hours of CPD per year
Nursing (UK)	Nursing & Midwifery Council	Over three years prescribers must undertake 450 hours of practice and at least 35 hours of learning relevant to their practice.
Accountancy (UK – AAT)	Institute of Chartered Accountants	The minimum requirement for members is 45 hours of CPD per calendar year, of which a minimum of 15 hours must be structured training and 30 hours unstructured.
Surveying	Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors	RICS does not prescribe a set number of hours
Architecture	Royal Institute of British Architects	Chartered members of the RIBA are required to do the following each year: at least 19.5 hours per year from the RIBA's prescribed core curriculum for CPD at least 15.5 hours of professional development in other subjects

Table 1: Selected CPD Requirements

Pseudonym	Sex	Coaching Level	Sport	Coaching Experience (yrs)
Julie	Female	Novice (Level 1)	Badminton	<1
Sam	Male	Novice (Level 1)	Basketball	3
Jim	Male	Novice (Level 1)	Football	2
Hannah	Female	Novice (Level 1)	Hockey	<1
Joanne	Female	Novice (Level 2)	Ice-Skating	6
Ian	Male	Novice (Level 2)	Football	<1
Nicola	Female	Novice (Level 2)	Swimming	12
Peter	Male	Novice (Level 2)	Hockey	6
Tom	Male	Novice (Level 2)	Basketball	12
Steven	Male	Developmental (Level 3)	Football	5
Tim	Male	Developmental (Level 3)	Football	3
Kenny	Male	Developmental (Level 3)	Athletics	32
Mike	Male	Developmental (Level 3)	Rugby	10
Andrew	Male	Developmental (Level 3)	Judo	7
John	Male	Developmental (Level 3)	Volleyball	6
Rona	Female	Developmental (Level 3)	Volleyball	8
Ben	Male	Elite (Level 4)	Judo	13
James	Male	Elite (Level 4)	Hockey	15
Sue	Female	Elite (Level 4)	Lacrosse	21
Patrick	Male	Elite (Level 4)	Tennis	25
Matt	Male	Elite (Level 4)	Squash	20
Grant	Male	Elite (Level 5)	Skiing	24
Doug	Male	Elite (Level 5)	Basketball	32
Bob	Male	Elite (Level 5)	Football	23
Carol	Female	Elite (Level 5)	Swimming	15

Table 2: Participating Coach Details

Transition (Moving to Chartered Coach Status)
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Stages of Coaching	Aspiring	Novice	Developmental	Elite
Characteristics Of Coaches	Pre-qualification. Little knowledge or experience.	Early stages of coaching. Working with more knowledgeable coaches	Committed to education & improvement	Working with coaching programmes and leading other coaches.
Purpose of CPD	Inspire/motivate/ enthuse	Build and expand knowledge base	Develop and apply knowledge in context.	Identify and resolve individual needs
CPD Provider	Local sports clubs, Local sports councils	Sporting Organisations, Coaching Organizations, other sports bodies & charitable organizations	Sporting Organisations, Coaching Organizations	Formal links between Sporting organizations and Higher Education Institutions.
Format of CPD	Informal, information-giving and voluntary	Range of formats from formal to informal. Making use of traditional methods as well as web discussions, blogs etc.	Coaching forums: creating the cross fertilization of coaches between sports. Coach observations, discussions and reviews	Problem based learning; decision making situations; critical thinking skills
Benefits of CPD	Encourage participants to undertake formal qualifications	Identify and strengthen coaching commitment Develop the key skills of both coaching and professional practice	Reflect on, discuss and review coaching practice. Formulate goals to strengthen coaching practice	Develop self – determining, self-regulating coaches Establish personal and team learning plans

Table 3. Suggested CPD format, highlighting differing approaches for differing levels

## Figures

What do you understand by the term CPD?

Is it used in your sport?

Have you participated in any form of CPD

Do you feel it is necessary –why?

How has it benefitted you as a coach?

Do you feel that you need to make time for CPD?

What kind of learning experiences did you have while participating in any form of CPD?

What do you think could be improved to help you have a better learning experience?

How would you describe CPD and its importance to your fellow coaches?

If you had unlimited resources, what three things would help you develop as a coach?

Figure 1: Interview Schedule